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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, September 27, 1943

Subject: "INVISIBLE WASTE". Information from food distribution officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

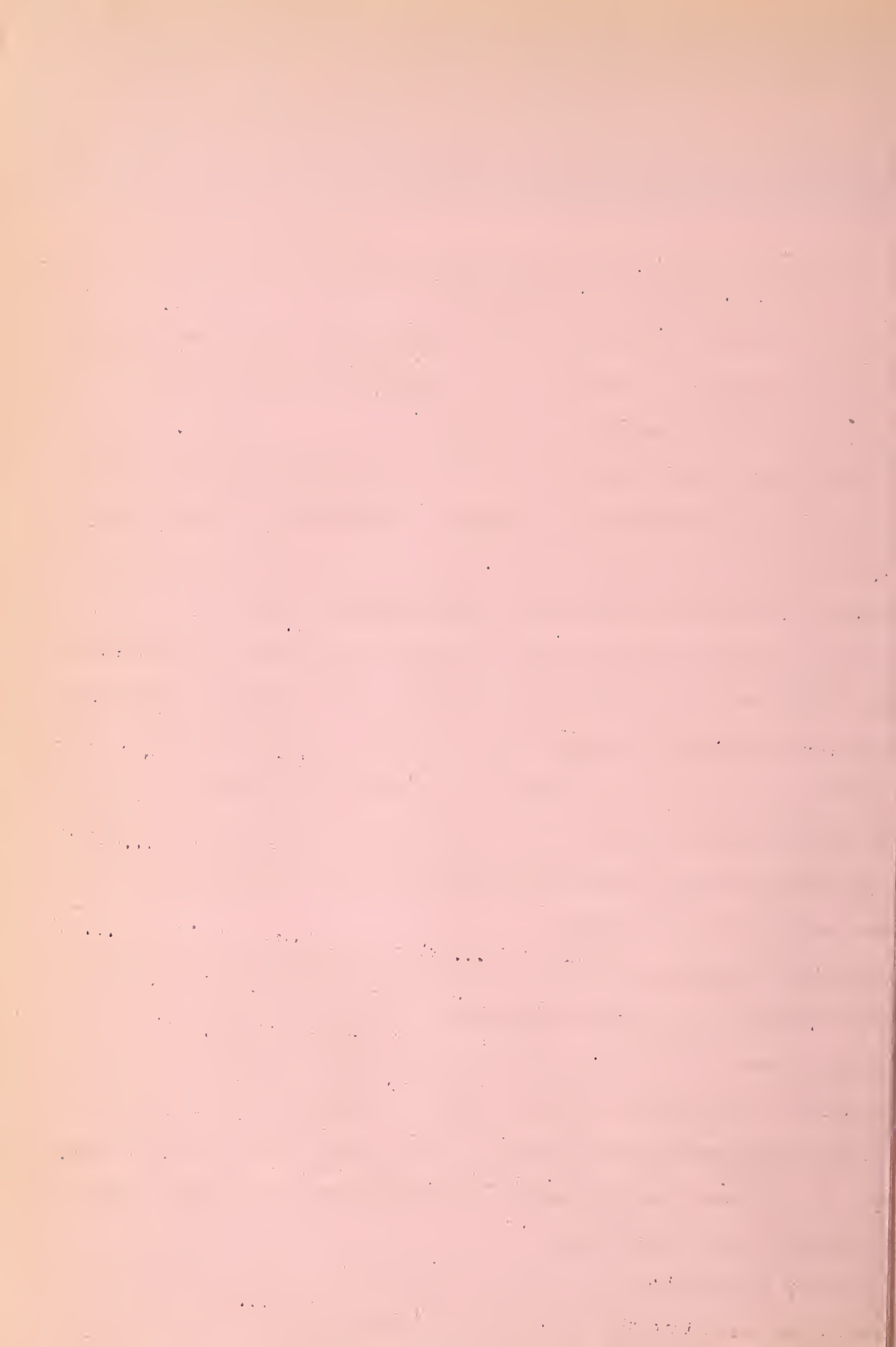
Do you know about "invisible waste"? Sounds pretty mysterious, doesn't it? But it's not really a mystery at all -- instead, invisible waste is a tragedy, and it happens every day in our homes.

Every day we waste strategic food values, even though we can't see them. ...important vitamins and minerals especially. We waste them by the way we COOK food, and by the way we STORE it. Food values just slip away from us unless we're VERY careful...and they're usually ones we can't afford to lose.

We can't afford to lose Vitamin A and Vitamin C...those are the ones we get in our green and yellow vegetables, in fruits, and in tomatoes. We've been eating more of the foods rich in vitamins A and C in the last few years, and a good thing that is, too. But so many people need and want these vitamins, that even with all the homegrown foods from our victory gardens, we may have less Vitamin A and less Vitamin C in our meals this winter than we had last year...and that's less than we need for good health.

Wasting thiamine (thy'-a-min) ... riboflavin (ry'-bo-flay'-vin)...and calcium, is tragic, too...even though we probably have more of those food values than we had before the war. Meat and milk give us riboflavin, and milk is rich in calcium, too. The program to enrich flour and bread, and the use of whole grain cereals, has brought up the thiamine as well as the riboflavin in our diet. But still we must save these food values. Why should we let invisible waste rob us of any part of our food store?

Perhaps you're wondering when and how vitamins and minerals are lost.... how they vanish into thin air! There are lots of ways...



Sometimes we lose vitamins by letting vegetables become old and wilted before we use them. When vegetables lie around in a warm place and become wilted, much of the vitamin C simply disappears. But if we gather or buy our vegetables when they are fresh, and keep them in a cold place, we can save the most vitamins. And freezing or proper canning of strictly fresh vegetables and fruits saves vitamins, and minerals as well.

Of course some of these vitamin values float out or are destroyed in cooking, unless we're careful. And that's one reason it's good to remember: Fruits and vegetables are BETTER RAW. We get all the food values when we eat them raw. But don't let sliced or cut up fruits or vegetables sit around in the air; for instance, prepare salad just before you serve it and it will be most full of food value.

But often we have to cook fruits and vegetables, and then we should remember: COOK THE VITAMIN WAY. That means first of all: Don't soak out any food values. Several of the vitamins and also minerals in fresh vegetables are easily soaked out by water. If these minerals and vitamins were colored, we could see them because they would color the water. You know what happens to beets if you cut them up and soak them in water...the coloring is soaked out into the water. That's just what happens to the B vitamins, to Vitamin C, and to iron and other minerals, when we soak our vegetables.

And when you put them on the stove, cook your vegetables or fruits in as little water as you can. If we cook vegetables in JUST ENOUGH boiling salted water to keep them from sticking...and use the cooking water afterwards...we SAVE minerals and vitamins. And often, when we use only a small amount of water or none at all, there's nothing left but richly flavored juices, easy to use. Whether you have much or little cooking liquid left, don't feed it to the kitchen sink, Save it and use it.

To cook the vitamin way, we should cook just long enough to get the food done. Long boiling spoils the taste and the looks, and increases the loss of vitamins. Raw cabbage contains lots of vitamin C...but if we keep it simmering on the stove for an hour or more, most of the vitamins will be destroyed. If you're cooking vegetables with fat pork or in a meat stew, start cooking the meat alone, and add the vegetables just before the meat is done, to have the most food value.

Cook fruits and vegetables in their peel whenever possible...most of the hard-to-get food values lie near the skin. If you must pare them, pare THIN. You don't want to throw good vitamins and minerals into the garbage pail. And cook whole, or in large pieces. And finally, to cook the vitamin way, Never add soda. If green vegetables are not too old and are properly prepared, they will be tender and green anyway.

Now let's go back to the little bit of water you cooked your vegetables in. Perhaps you wondered why you'd save it and what you'd use it for. No use saving anything that's going to sit around your icebox for days. But how about starting a "vitamin bottle"? Whenever you have vitamin-rich cooking water left over, put it into the bottle and keep it in your icebox. Make a point to use up the juices you collect in this way within a day or two. Try them ice-cold as an appetizer...alone or mixed with tomato juice. Or use instead of water in gravies or sauces...they'll add vitamins and minerals. And vegetable juices make good soup...that's something to be thinking about with brisk fall days coming along. Serve plain hot vegetable juice as a first course...or use as a base in more substantial cream or vegetable soups. In any case, be sure to save your vegetable juice...STARVE THE KITCHEN SINK and keep your family healthy.

Choose and store fruits and vegetables carefully...eat raw as often as possible...cook the vitamin way in little water, just a little while, with the peel on...starve the kitchen sink by keeping a vitamin bottle for vegetable cooking water. Remember these things and you'll not have to worry about invisible waste.

